

The Influence of Social Cultural Factors on the Emergence of Nigerian English

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Abstract

The study is the influence of socio-cultural factors on the emergence of Nigerian English. This study is aimed at finding what the socio-cultural factors are. Data was collected from primary source using questionnaire and random sampling technique was used by the researcher because the respondents were selected randomly to get twenty lecturers from the Faculty. The Data was analyzed using Chi-Square. It was observed that Nigerian students more often than not use Nigerian English for the British English. It was recommended that students should have the flare of writing especially writing in Standard English.

Keywords: English, Colonial Masters, British, Nigeria, Writing

Introduction

The English language is undoubtedly the most important legacy of the British colonial masters to Nigerians. English got a foothold in Nigeria through the native interpreters trained overseas and employed in the have Coast, as well as through living professional interpreters who offered their services to ship captains. Paradoxically, the development the English language in

Nigeria was furthermore, spread by the abolition of the slave trade but in a rather circumstantial way. According to Adetugbo, Crowder reports that in the late 1930's many freed slaves from free town came back to their original homes in Lagos Badagory and Abeokuta. Some of these freed slaves were employed by both the missionaries, trading companies and British

administrators as interpreters, messengers and even teachers.

By 1914 when the amalgamation took place, there were at least 141 secondary schools scattered all over the country. Finally, with the unification of the different people and their denomination, the natives had no option than to accept the apparent superiority of the Whiteman in all things, including his language. Having clearly traced the historical background of the Nigerian English and subsequent acceptance of the English, we shall dwell briefly on the protracted argument as to whether there is anything like Nigerian English, the answer is positive- as Ubahakwe has rightly observed. It assumes an establishment status of the language in the sense that sees Nigerian English as a dialect subset comparable to the American, Australian, British Canadian or Rhodesian dialect. It is against this background that he went further to vividly point out variety (or

varieties) of English that can rightly be called Nigerian.

Objective of the Study

This research will go a long way to encourage efforts of some scholars in the development of English language, especially its adoption as a second language in Nigeria. This will generally enhance and at same time acknowledge the difference between the Queen's English, American, Canadian English, Nigerian English, to mention just a few. As a result, we shall adequately see why some set of languages otherwise referred to as Nigerian English are not classified under the Queen's English. We shall as well examine the various factors that necessitated or influenced the emergence of the Nigerian English.

It has been widely observed that there is a gap in the existing literatures with respect to the factors that gave rise to the emergence of the Nigerian English, its subsequent usage and its general

acceptance in the field of scholarship (grammar). On the other hand a lot of questions have been asked by students and people of like minds on whether there is any concept like Nigerian English, and if 'yes' what are the similarities and differences with that of queen's English.

Therefore, the findings of this work will go a long way to settle the questions in the minds of some scholars in respect of the existence, usage and adoption of the Nigerian English as a second language. This will a long way to contribute to the existing knowledge thereby enriching the general standard of English language as a field of study.

Research Questions

It has been the general beliefs of some scholars that the emergence of Nigerian English and its subsequent usage has contributed immensely to the general poor performance of the Nigerian students in spoken English. It is also believed that this poor performance in spoken English are

influenced by some socio-cultural and political factors. These factors go a long way to affect the general development of Nigeria, especially an educational circle. It is against this background that we pose the following research questions.

- (1) How far has Nigerian English contributed to the general educational development of Nigeria?
- (2) Is colonization one of the factors that gave rise to the emergence of Nigeria English.?
- (3) Did Nigerian English Emerge as a result of socio-cultural factors?

Methodology

In conducting this research, the researcher chose one tertiary institution in Anambra State. The selection of this institutions made it possible for the researcher to get data from the lecturers in the faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Population

The population of this study consists of twenty (20) lecturers from the faculty of Arts Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

Sample Techniques

Random sampling was used by the researcher because the respondents were selected randomly to get twenty lecturers from the Faculty.

Data Collections Techniques

Questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the faculty of the school. The questionnaire has two parts or sections. Section one consists of personal data demanding years of experience as a lecturer. Section two consists of twelve item questions on which the lecturers were requested to indicate their answers with response as follows:

Yes No

Method of Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire was done through the percentage method which the below formula was used:

$$\frac{N \times}{x} = \frac{100}{I}$$

Where x = Number of response.

N = total number of respondents

100 = percentage

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed according to the questionnaire items. The analysis was done using percentages. Tables in this chapter consist of respondent's responses with their corresponding percentages. The total number of the respondents and their total responses were used to get the percentage, which were used for the analysis.

Tables 1:

Question one

Do you agree that Nigerian English has contributed to the educational development of Nigeria?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	20	100%
No	0	0%
Total	20	100%

From the statistical table, all the 20 respondents agreed that Nigerian English has contributed to the educational development of Nigeria.

Question two

Is the English language the language of communication among all Nigerian tribes?

20 respondents were of the opinion that English has contributed to the educational development of Nigeria because it is the language of communication among all the tribes in Nigeria.

Questions Three

Do you agree that the Nigerian educational standard is falling because of the poor performance of the Nigerians in speaking of correct English?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	95%
No	3	5%
Total	20	100%

The result above shows that 17 respondents representing 95% of the population accepts that the Nigerian educational standard is falling because of the poor performances of the Nigerian in speaking of correct English.

Table 3:

Question Four

Will the Nigerian educational standard improve if Nigerians learn how to write and speak English appropriately?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	12	80%
No	8	20%
Total	20	100%

80% of the respondents accepts the fact the Nigerian educational standard will improve if the Nigerians learn how to write and speak English appropriately while 20% did not accept.

Table 4:

Question V

Do you think that the imposition of the English language on Nigerians helped in the development of Nigeria English?

Options	No of Respondents	Percentages
Yes	14	70%
No	6	30%
Total	20	100%

Here 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that the imposition of the English language on Nigerians helped in the development of Nigeria English.

Discussion and Findings

It is our finding that there exists what is known as the Nigerian English. This is quite different from the British, with varieties and standards. The Nigerian English came into existence as a result of some socio-Cultural factors like trade, religion, administration and socialization, which were pronounced during the era of colonization. The Nigerian Students aware of the existence of the Nigerian English speak it fluently. The unfortunate thing is

that a good number of these speakers do not know the origin. They can't also distinguish between Nigerian British English from the Nigerian English. Examples are as follows:

realities that I make the following possible recommendations:

1. The Nigeria University Commission should enact a policy to make students undergo a compulsory Language reform

Nigerian English	British English
1. I do not recognize you	course, in British English, which should be done at first year, despite the student course of study. I do not Know you
2. Please help me pack my load	2. Lecturers who are not trained well in communication skills should not be allowed
3. I am coming (going away)	I will be back in a minute to lecture the students.
4. We trekked from the gate to the hotel	3. English Lecturers should concentrate more on the aspects of morphology,
5. The Chairman was not on seat when the board members visited him	The chairman was not in his office when the sentence formation, and use of sentence, board members called on him

spellings.

Recommendations and Suggestions

It was observed that Nigerian students more often than not erroneously use Nigerian English for the British English. This, as a matter of fact, has done more harm than good to the Nigerian students and above all, the general educational standard of this country. It is in the light of the above

4. Students should study texts, novels, magazines, journals etc written in good English.

5. Students should have the flare of writing especially writing in Standard English.

6. Students should always consult a good dictionary whenever there is a conflict in the use of terms.

All these suggestions will go a long way to shape the spoken English Nigerian students to meet the international standard.

Conclusion

We have been convinced that there exists both the British-Nigerian English and Nigerian English, which was necessitated, by a number of socio-cultural factors as enumerated in this work. However, the Nigerian students are exposed more to the latter, Nigerian English than the former, British English in schools, therefore it is expected that their performance in English will not easily reflect the British Standard English. Therefore Nigerian English remains Nigerian distinct language identity. Nigerians who use Nigerian English should understand the medium, situation, context and setting in which it is used. In other words, they should know when to use Nigerian English and when not to use it.

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